

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of funneling user responses in a voice portal system to determine a desired item or service, the method comprising:
 - a) establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and
 - b) determining if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found, wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a new further attribute of the item or service sought;
wherein steps (a) and (b) comprise a single query.
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of wherein the step of establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service comprises assigning a user preference to the attribute value.
3. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service wherein the step of establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service comprises:
prompting the user to supply an attribute value associated with the first particular attribute;
establishing an attribute vocabulary set related to a the first particular attribute of a the desired item or service;
querying a user for an attribute value associated with the particular attribute, the attribute value being a member of the attribute vocabulary set; and

identifying the attribute value given by the user by comparing the attribute value with the attribute vocabulary set.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of establishing an attribute vocabulary set comprises providing a group of possible verbal responses to a query on ~~an the first attribute of a desired item or service.~~

5. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of identifying the attribute value given by the user comprises providing fallback queries to query the user further for an attribute value which is in the attribute vocabulary set.

6. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein the step of providing fallback queries comprises asking the user for at least one substitute attributes for the particular attribute of a desired item or service.

7. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of identifying the attribute comprises setting a preference for the attribute.

8. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of identifying the attribute comprises setting a global preference for the attribute, the global preference being applied to attributes in a plurality of domains of interest.

9. (currently amended) A system for funneling voice portal user responses to determine a desired item or service, the system comprising:

a user interface; and

a database coupled to the user interface, the user interface coordinating communications with a user, the database storing information regarding attributes, attribute vocabulary sets, and Internet-based information;

whereby the user interface

a) establishes an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service, queries a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and

(b) determines if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found, wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a new further attribute of the item or service sought; wherein steps (a) and (b) comprise a single query.

10. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface assigns a user preference to the attribute value.

11. (currently amended) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface establishes an attribute vocabulary set related to a particular attribute of a desired item or service, queries the user for an attribute value associated with the particular attribute, and identifies the attribute value given by the user prompts the user to supply an attribute value associated with the first particular attribute; establishes an attribute vocabulary set related to the first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and identifies the attribute value given by the user by comparing the attribute value with the attribute vocabulary set.

12. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the database stores preferences of the user.

13. (original) The system of claim 9, further comprising a customer management subsystem configured to store user related information.

14. (original) The system of claim 13, wherein the customer management subsystem records user responses to queries from the user interface.

15. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface communicates with a user using voice.

16. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface utilizes a wireless application protocol (WAP) platform.

17. (currently amended) A voice portal configured to funnel user responses to determine a desired item or service, the voice portal comprising:

means for performing the step of:

a) ~~establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service;~~ and means for performing the step of:

(b) ~~determining if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found,~~ wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a new further particular attribute of the item or service sought.

18. (currently amended) The voice portal of claim 17, wherein ~~the means for querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service wherein the means for establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service comprises means for:~~

~~prompting the user to supply an attribute value associated with the first particular attribute;~~

~~establishing an attribute vocabulary set related to a the first particular attribute of a the desired item or service;~~

~~querying a user for an attribute value associated with the particular attribute, the attribute value being a member of the attribute vocabulary set; and~~

identifying the attribute value given by the user by comparing the attribute value with the attribute vocabulary set.

19. (currently amended) The voice portal of claim 17, further comprising wherein the means for establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service comprises means for assigning a user preference to the attribute value.

20. (original) The voice portal of claim 17, further comprising means for setting a user preference.

21. (original) The voice portal of claim 17, further comprising means for recording user responses.

22. (original) The voice portal of claim 17, wherein the means for identifying the attribute value given by the user comprises means for providing fallback queries to ask more questions regarding the attribute.

23. (currently amended) A computer program product comprising computer readable program code for identifying user inputs to a voice portal system, the program code in the computer program product comprising:

first computer readable code for performing:

(a) establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of a desired item or service; and second computer readable code for performing:

(b) determining if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found, wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a new further particular attribute of the item or service sought;

wherein steps (a) and (b) comprise a single query.

24. (currently amended) The computer program code of claim 23, further comprising wherein the program code for establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service comprises third computer program code for assigning a user preference to the attribute value.

25. (currently amended) The computer program code of claim 23, wherein the program code for querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service wherein the step of establishing an attribute value associated with a particular attribute of a desired item or service comprises:

third computer program product for establishing a vocabulary set;

fourth computer readable program code for receiving voice input from a user; and

fifth computer readable program code for recognizing the voice input from the user, the recognized voice input being an identified attribute wherein the attribute is identified by comparing the value given by the user with the vocabulary set.

26. (original) The computer program code of claim 25, wherein the computer readable program code for establishing a vocabulary set comprises computer readable program code for creating a list of words based on an attribute.

27. (original) The computer program code of claim 23, further comprising computer readable program code for defining a user preference based on user responses.